

Non-Food Incentives

Resolved, that Utah PTA will help educate teachers on the importance of using non-food incentives to reward students and of having healthy food in the classroom when they have parties.

Justification

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention offers “Guidelines for School Health Programs to Promote Lifelong Healthy Eating.” They state, “Schools should discourage teachers from using food for disciplining or rewarding students. Some teachers give students low-nutritive foods, such as candy, as a reward for good behavior, and punish misbehaving students by denying a low-nutritive treat. These practices reinforce students' preferences for low-nutritive foods and contradict what is taught during nutrition education. Schools should recommend that both teachers and parents serve healthy party snacks and treats.”

<http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/00042446.htm>

Alternatives to Using Food as a Reward, Michigan State University Extension

<http://www.tn.fcs.msue.msu.edu/foodrewards.pdf>

“It undermines nutrition education being taught in the school environment. It encourages overconsumption of foods high in added sugar and fat. It teaches kids to eat when they’re not hungry as a reward to themselves.”

“From Cupcakes to Carrots: Local School Wellness Policies One Year Later” was published by the School Nutrition Association in 2007. It shows that 33.5% of schools nationwide had completed implementation of a policy on not offering food as a reward.

The Gold Medal Schools program has criteria at the gold level which prohibits faculty and staff from using food as an incentive (<http://www.hearthighway.org/gms/gmsguide/pdfs/gold2.pdf>). The book Rewards Kids Will Crave: Non-Food Alternatives was created by Gold Medal Schools. The best ideas for rewards can come straight from the students themselves. The book lists common rewards that children prefer: extra recess time, coupons for class store items, time for games in the classroom, and class points for other rewards, such as reading time.

The Model Local School Wellness Policies on Physical Activity and Nutrition was created by the National Alliance for Nutrition and Activity. In this document, it states:

“Schools will not use foods or beverages, especially those that do not meet the nutrition standards for foods and beverages sold individually...as rewards for academic performance or good behavior, and will not withhold food or beverages (including food served through school meals) as a punishment.

“Schools should limit celebrations that involve food during the school day to no more than one party per class per month. Each party should include no more than one food or beverage that does not meet nutrition standards for foods and beverages sold individually.”

In the School Health Index, under the module School Health and Safety Policies and Environment, there is the category of “Prohibit using food as reward or punishment.”

Changing the Scene: Improving the School Nutrition Environment has some ideas on how to define success in providing healthy food options. It states, “School staff does not use food as a reward or punishment for students.”

The Committee on Nutrition Standards for Foods in Schools developed “Nutrition Standards for Foods in Schools: Leading the Way Toward Healthier Youth.” Standard 10 is that, “Food and beverages are not used as rewards or discipline for academic performance or behavior.”

The 2006 School Health Policies and Programs Study found the following:

- The percentage of districts (nationwide) prohibiting schools from using food or food coupons as a reward increased from 11.3% in 2000 to 261% in 2006.
- In 2006, 3 states (Alabama, Arkansas, and Texas) reported state-level policies prohibiting using food or food coupons as a reward, and 26 states (including Utah) reported having policies discouraging the practice.